

# Small Non-Profit Uses Social Media, Crowdsourcing to Best 70 Organizations in Online Fundraising Contest

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Contact: Adam Levner of Critical Exposure, +1-202-258-6626, adam@criticalexposure.org

Student-advocacy group leverages new technologies to motivate greatest number of donors and claim more than \$20,000 in contributions and prizes.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Critical Exposure, a small D.C.-based nonprofit organization that empowers low-income students through photography and advocacy training, used an array of social media channels -- including Twitter, Facebook and crowdsourcing -- to mobilize hundreds of supporters and prevail over larger, more-established organizations in the recent GlobalGiving U.S. Open Challenge.

The contest pitted more than 70 charitable organizations against one another for \$9,000 in cash bonuses and permanent spots on [GlobalGiving.com](http://GlobalGiving.com), an online marketplace for international philanthropy. By strategically leveraging social networking and micro-blogging, Critical Exposure's staff of four was able to generate the most individual donations and win two bonuses totaling \$5,000.

"The GlobalGiving Challenge was a great opportunity for us to engage people through social media," said Critical Exposure Co-Director Adam Levner. "Our supporters became personally invested in the competition through regular updates through Facebook, Twitter and email letting them know just how close the race was. The other key to our success was asking people to make just a \$10 donation, which made it easier for friends and supporters to reach out to their networks."

By the end of the challenge, held June 8-30, Critical Exposure raised \$15,669 from 614 donors, winning an additional \$3,000 for acquiring the greatest number of unique donors and \$2,000 for finishing second in overall donations -- for a total of \$20,669.

Crowdsourcing -- the act of calling upon a large, undefined group to perform a task -- played a major role in the organization's success. During the competition's last days, Critical Exposure placed an open call to supporters, providing them with sample Facebook updates to post, Twitter messages to tweet and emails to send.

"The response blew us away," added Levner. "Our supporters became a powerful fundraising force, taking it upon themselves to reach out to their personal networks, who then forwarded our messages to even

more people. As a result, we received 300 donations on the last day alone."

"On the final day of the contest, my Facebook page overflowed with status updates from dozens of supporters asking their friends to make a donation," said Critical Exposure Co-Director Heather Rieman. "This contest proved that a small, dedicated group of people comfortable with social media tools can compete with anyone and win."

Critical Exposure teaches low-income youth how to use the power of photography and their own voices to become effective advocates for education reform and social change. The money raised through the GlobalGiving challenge will allow Critical Exposure to provide cameras and training to 60 students over the course of a year.

For more information on Critical Exposure, or to receive the "Student Photo of the Month" email, please visit [www.criticalexposure.org](http://www.criticalexposure.org).

#### About Critical Exposure

Critical Exposure empowers young people by teaching them how to use photography and their own voices to create social change. By combining art and advocacy, the organization's unique approach gives youth a way to build public support to address serious issues they face daily, like poor school facilities, teen pregnancy, youth unemployment and homelessness.

Critical Exposure was founded in 2004 and has trained more than 450 middle and high school students in seven states. The powerful images produced by students have engaged the public and helped convince legislators to allocate more than \$400 million dollars in new funding for public schools in under-served communities.

The students and their images have been featured on Oprah, CNN, the Washington Post, and other media outlets, reaching millions of people. By helping young people make a big difference with something as small as a camera, Critical Exposure is giving youth a chance to improve their lives and be leaders in their communities.

SOURCE Critical Exposure

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